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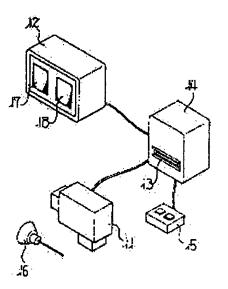
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(54) JUDGEMENT OF TOOTH COLOR FOR PREPARING ARTIFICIAL TOOTH

(57)Abstract;

PURPOSE: To properly transmit a translucent feeling to a dental technician, by selecting the translucent feeling in displaying the color image of an adjacent tooth and displaying the translucent region or dentin shape of the teeth in a color state different from other image part.

CONSTITUTION: An adjacent tooth is photographed under a definite illumination condition by a color camera 11 to be displayed on the picture of a color CRT 12 through a controller 14 and the shape of the translucent region of the adjacent tooth 17 is displayed, for example, by a different color so as to be capable of being discriminated from the other region of the picture of the CRT 12. Herein, the dentin presence part of the teeth has no translucent feeling and this translucent feeling appears on a cut end part. Therefore, in place of the translucent region, the shape of the dentin of the teeth is displayed so as to be capable of being discriminated from the other region on the picture of the color CRT 12. By this method, each region of an artificial tooth is replaced with a shade guide visually while the color distribution of the adjacent tooth 17 displayed on the picture of the color CRT 12 is referred.



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図発明の名称 人工歯作製用歯色判定方法

> ②特 題 昭62-210616

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1. 発明の名称

人工估作製用估色判定方法

2. 特許請求の範囲

カラー関像入力手段と、カラー関像表示手段と、 カラー画像記憶手段と、勧御手段と、制御操作手 段とを備え、歯牙の色見本の色彩情報を予め前記 カラー画像記憶手段に記憶させておき、患者口腔 内に対する照明条件を可変させて作製すべき人工 歯の隣在歯を前記カラー顕像入力手段により撮影 し、前記興在館のカラー函像を少なくとも歯牙の 半透明領域又は歯牙の象牙質の形状が前記カラー 爾像表示手段上で他の雷像部分と色を異ならせた 状態で表示させ、前記カラー画像記憶手段に記憶 させた色見本の色彩情報を参照してこの際在僧の 曾色を判定することを特徴とする人工歯作製用歯 色料定方法。

3. 発明の詳細な説明

技術分野

本発明は、歯科医療分野の精緻における人工歯 作製用歯色料定方法に関する。

從来技術

一般に、歯科における響美性とは自然そのもの の美しさであり、人工歯或いは褶縒物を前歯部に 装着させた場合に、あくまでも自然に見えること が重要である。しかるに、過常は技工士が作製し た人工借収いは補援物の色調が患者の口腔内で他 の歯牙と全く見分けがつかない程に関和すること は極めて粉である。口腔内において特に人工歯の 色が他の歯牙と関和しなかった時、技工士側から は歯科医による人工歯作製の色見本となるシェー ドガイドの選択がよくないという判断がなされ、 賃料医倒からは技工士による人工者のシェードガ イドとの色合わせがよくないという判断がなされ る如く、両者間での責任転嫁といった問題を生ず

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٥.

ここに、現在、入工館には1. 焼付ポーセレン 起、2. 全部関材冠、3. 光重合型の高分子材料 を用いたものなどがあり、歯の一部に槽級する材料も種々ある。

何れにしても、人工歯を作製したり天然歯の一部を精額する場合には、その色を決定しなければならないが、通常は、治療する歯の酶在歯 (天然 歯であることが多い) の色を参考としている。

例えば、人工歯作製時における人工歯と患者口 腔内の胸在歯との色合わせは、シエードガイドと 称される色見本を顔在歯と照合させることにより 行なうようにしている。ここに、各社から発充さ れているシエードガイドは独自の色種を持つてお り、各々にA1、A2、C1、C2。…の如くシ エードガイドは各メーカ間で規格化されているも のではないが、一般には、個々のシエードガイド は天然歯に近い材料で歯牙形状に構成されている。 そして、そのシエードガイドの色を再現するため のパウダーの複類、その配合類、配合量は個々に 予め決められている。従つて、シエードガイドに より人工歯の色を選択すれば目的とする色に近い 人工歯を作製できるシステムとされている。

観察し、人工協の色合わせを行なうこともある。

このため、砂察官における患者の口腔内状態が 技工室においても再項され、更に世牙の視覚情報 が数値にて表現されることが望まれる。

このような観点から、質科治療において、患者の口腔内の様子を拡大カラー表示する技術は重要であり、現実に製品化されている装置もある。これは、超小型CCDカラーカメラ、カラーテレビ、ビデオをシステム化してなるものであるが、この装置は単に口腔内を拡大カラー表示するに過ぎず、人工個作製に供するための機能はない。

又、天然歯の色を数値化する装置が市販されて いるものの、臨床に使用されている例は極めて少 ない。

ここで、天然館の色製を第8図を参照して考えてみる。天然館2に入射した入射光Aの一部はエナメル質3表面で反射され(納面反射光Bや拡散反射光C)、光沢や凹凸を感じさせるが、殆どの

入財光Aはこのエナメル質3を透過して歯牙内部 に入射する。エナメル質3に入射した光は、拡数 とハイドロキシアパタイトの微細な結晶による選 択的な数乱をして遠過するため、オパール効果を 伴い、反射光は青み若しくはグレーがかつた白色 で高度な半透明感がある。エナメル質3は厚い程 その題者负を確認するため、 希とがエナメル質3 にて機成される切齒部分はエナメル質問有の色を 示す。特に、切場部分の先端は形態的に厚みがな いため、完全な透明に近い場合もある。一方、エ ナメル賞3を通過して象牙貫4やエナメル象牙冑 に達した光は、その部分で拡散されながら、その 固有のスペクトルである黄橙色や褐色を唇伽面に 反射する。エナメル質3の厚い中央部ではエナメ ル費固有の色とエナメル象牙境や象牙質4の色が 混色された形で見えるが、披頭部(歯肉5に近い 部分)に近づくに従いエナメル質固有の色の影響 が少なくなり、エナメル象牙境や象牙質4部分の

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即ち、天然歯は可観光に対し半透明であり、歯 牙内部まで浸透した光がエナメル質内のアパタイト結晶により多遺散乱を繰迟すため、天然歯の色は、脳明条件、観察方向とともに大きく変化する ものである。これに対し、既存の歯色測定被優は このような多重数乱による歯色の変化を、ある限 られた条件においてのみ測定しているに過ぎず、 人工歯を作製するに必要な天然歯の特性値として は充分ではない。よって、既存の歯色測定装置が 臨床にて使用されることは極めて少ないものとな つている。

このように天然僧(関在僧)の色を正確に表現することは極めて函籍である。しかし、人工僧の色が患者の口腔内で他の僧牙と飼和しないことが多いのは、現在の歯科補級が、人工僧の色を決定する歯科医伽と人工會を作製する技工士伽との分果システムによるものであり、その間の指示者1による情報伝達が正確でないことも大きな要因の一つである。

特に、世牙の半透明感 (半透明度及びその領域) の透訳は、人工資を作製する上で非常に重要なデータの一つとなる。この点、従来の如きシェード

ガイドによる目視判定では、半透明感の選択は困 競である。

目的

本発明は、このような点に鑑みなされたもので、 隣在費の色を参考にしながら人工歯ないしは補正 物の色を決めて人工歯ないしは補正物を作製する 際に、歯牙の半透明感の選択を適正に行なうこと ができ、より天然歯に近いものの作製に寄与し得 る人工歯作製用歯色判定方法を提供することを目 的とする。

構成

本発明は、上記目的を達成するため、カラー画像入力手段と、カラー画像表示手段と、カラー画像表示手段と、制御手段と、制御手段と、制御手段と、制御手段と、制御手段と、制御を予め前記カラー画像を予め前記カラー画像入力を対した。前記を前記カラー画像入力手段により提影し、前記

際在借のカラー関係を少なくとも歯牙の半透明領域又は歯牙の象牙質の形状が前起カラー関係表示手段上で他の関係部分と色を異ならせた状態で表示させ、前部カラー関係記憶手段に記憶させた色見本の色彩情報を参照してこの隣在歯の歯色を判定することを特徴とするものである。

以下、本発明の一実施例を第1図ないも第6図に基づいて説明する。まず、第1図に本実施例を実施である。まず、第1図に本実施例を実施するための黄色表示装置の概略構成を示す。 本装置は、カラー面操入力手段としてのカラーカメラ11と、カラー関係表示手段としてのカラーの関係を示すると、カラーの関係を示するという。 でRT12と、フロッピーデイスク13と、制御役としてのコントローラ14と、制御役の表に表すの口腔の表に表すの口腔内等を照明する光測16が設けられている。

このような装置の基本的な機能は、一定の照明 条件下で同一のカラーカメラ11で入力したシエ

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ードガイドのカラー画像と患者口腔内の天然盤の カラー画像を、カラーCRT12の阿一画面上で 表示比較することにより、作製すべき人工僧の色 を決定することである。この時、カラー関像の任 寒の点のR, G, B信号を取出すことにより、2 点間の色魚を算出したり、入工歯作製の色見本と なる勝在歯と最も近い色のシエードガイドを選択 することも可能である。ここに、シェードガイド のカラー確像及び各点のR、G、B信号は装置内 部のハードデイスクメモリ(カラー面像記憶手段) に記憶させ、患者口腔内の隣在歯のカラー図像の 色情報及び決定後のシェードガイド番号等はフロ ツピーデイスク13の如き可擬性記憶媒体に格納 させる。この可避性記憶媒体が従来の指示書に代 わつて歯科医から技工士に対する情報伝達媒体と なるものである。なお、診察室と技工室との照明 が超高旗色性蛍光灯(FL-EDL)などにより 服度も含めて統一されていれば、特に照明手段は

必要としない。又、制御操作手取もマウス 1 5 に 既られるものではない。

このような構成において、本実施例方法を第2 図を参照して説明する。

① まず、警察室において患者の口腔内、特に 治療する歯の胸在歯を一定なる照明条件下に照明 しながら、カラーカメラ11で撮影し、コントロ ーラ14を介して第2図(a)に示す如くカラーC RT12の側面上に表示させる。図中、カラーC RT12には複数の歯が表示されているが、この 内、例えば17で示す歯が注目すべき胸を歯である。

ここに、口腔内の撮影に際しては、歯牙表面の水分はガーゼ等により除去し、更に、光源16による服明光に対する歯牙とカラーカメラ11との外変を調整し、歯牙からの直接反射光を植力少なくさせる。特に、光駅16個とカラーカメラ11個とに偏光フイルタを用いるようにすれば、歯牙

からの直接反射光を低減させた状態で撮影できる。 これは、人工世作製において顕在量17を参照す るが、この時に色とともに重要となる点として、 歯牙の表面構造及び半进明瞭があるからである。 ここに、歯牙の表面構造とは天然歯に見られる白 い帯状部、エナメル質の割れ目(エナメル薬)の 中に有機質がはさまつたエナメルチェックライン などであり、増齢的に変化するものである。ここ に、通常の照明光で天然曽をカラーカメラ11で 撮影しカラーCRT12で表示させた場合、その 色の再現性はある程度保たれるが、その直接反射 光のため、歯牙表面の微細構造は再現しにくいも のである。この点、光源18とカラーカメラ11 側に似光フイルタを介在させた時の天然歯の画像 は、その照明の影響、特に直接反射光の影響をあ まり受けないものとなり、歯牙表面の微細構造も 再項できることになる。

② 次に、治療する歯に対する酶在歯17を第

2 図(b)に示すようにカラーCRT12上で拡大 表示させるとともに、図面上の適当なる位置に移動させて表示させる。このような異在は17の色が人工首作製のための色見本となる。なお、第2 図(a)に示す表示状態を省略し、直接第2図(b) に示すような拡大表示状態とさせてもよい。又、 前述の如く曾牙からの直接反射光を避けて画像処理 によっているが、必要に応じて画像処理 によっているが、必要に応じて画像処理 によっては、歯牙の輪郭強調などの画像処理を よい。更には、歯牙の輪郭強調などの画像処理を あすようにしてもよい。

② つづいて、第2図(c)に示すように、カラーCRT12上に拡大表示されている隣在街17を破壊の如く領域分割する。これは、隣在街(天然間)が前述した如く全て均一な色で構成されているわけではないので、複数の領域に分割して、各々の領域毎にシエードガイドの色に厳挽えるためである。即ち、隣在台の色を参考に人工街の色

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を決定するわけであるが、天然歯(隣在歯)の色 は歯肉に近い歯類部や中央部や切着部ではそれら の色が微妙に異なるものであり、従来の如く、隣 在歯の基本色だけを歯牙の色見本であるシェード ガイドより遊択(例えばB2)する方法では、人 工歯作製に必要な色情報が正確に得られない。そ こで、人工僧作製時の色見本となる際在館1.7を 領域分割し、各領域毎にシエードガイドに置換え るものである。このような隣在街17の領域分割 の方法、分割領域数は任意であるが、例えば第2 図(c)に①~⑨で示す如く9分割程度は最低限必 要とぶわれる。 更に、 酶在菌 17が領域分割表示 されたカラーCRT12の同一関団上において、 この臍在蟹の隣に、作製しようとする人工質の概 略的な形状も同時に表示させる。これは、隣在歯 17の色を参照しながら作製しようとする人工者 の色を配入するためのものであり、ここではシェ ードガイド記入用世牙18が表示されている。こ

のシエードガイド記入用歯牙18も開在歯17の 領域分割に対応させて領域分割されており、 隣在 歯17の領域に対応するシエードガイド記入用歯 牙18の領域に対しシエードガイドの色又はシエードガイド番号が記入される。

ところで、天然曾(隣在館)の色を決める時、 最も難しいのは、半透明感(半透明度とその領域 (形状))の認識である。天然歯がどのような半 透明度を持つているか、そして、半透明感を形成

している領域がどのような形状をしているかの奴 競は、技工士側にとって極めて重要な情報項目で ある。この点、カラーカメラ11により天然歯を 撮影しカラーCRT12両面上に表示させた場合、 その照明条件における天然歯の半透明感はある程 度再現することができる。更には、口腔内の照明 条件や天然歯の背景を変えてカラーカメラ11で 提影入力することにより、天然歯に関する他の情 報も増え、人工選作製のための有効なデータとな る。具体的には、歯牙の裏側(背景)が進度の高 い色で構成されていれば半透明感はより鮮明とな るので、カラーカメラ11による患者口腔内の撮 影時に口腔内に押入されるカラーカメラ連結部材 を過度の高い均一な色のもので構成すれば効果的 である。特に、カラーカメラ11で天然歯を読取 つたカラー面像情報なるRGB信号中には半透明 感を表わす情報も含まれており、照明条件や背景 の色を変えることにより、更に明確なる信号とし

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て取出すことも可能である。又、口腔内の関在儲 17をカラーカメラ11によつて撮影入力する時、 隣在儲17とカラーカメラ11の距離は一定であ ることが望ましい。又、 酶在儲17とカラーカメ ラ11の角度を変えて入力することは画像情報を 増やすという点からも必要であり、このため、カ ラーカメラ11と選結する部材を患者に固定し、 そのある点を支点として、 隣在儲17とカラーカ メラ11との角度を可変させるのがよい。

ところで、歯牙の半透明感の選択は、人工街を作製する上で非常に重要なデータの一つとなる。この点、従来の如きシェードガイドによる目視判定では、半透明感の選択は困難である。この点、本実施例では、半透明感を選択し、天然歯(隣在歯17)の半透明傾転の形状を、カラーCRT12個面上で他の傾転と区別できるように、例えば色を変えて表示させるものである。このような情報は技工士側においてもそのまま再項されるので、

非常に有効なデータとなる。ここに、 歯牙において象牙質のある部分は半透明感がなく、 この半透明感は切場部に現われる。 従って、 半透明傾域に代えて、 歯牙の象牙質の形状をカラー CRT12 両面上で他の領域と区別できるように表示させても同様の効果がある。

② しかして、第2図(c)の如くカラーCRT12 画面上に表示された群在第17の色分布を参照しながら、目根により、人工館(シェードガイド記入用館牙18)の各領域を第2図(d)に示すエードガイドの番号A1、B1、一等で表示していてもよい。具体例として、例えば隣在費17の組織のの色とを画面上で比較する。そして出版のの色とを画面上で比較する。そ

一致ないしはほぼ一致するシエードガイドを特定 する。なお、シエードガイドを表示する場所は任 意であり、例えば比較する隣在歯17の領域と部 分的に重なつてもよい。

するようにしてもよい.

このように関在値17の各領域に対応したシェードガイドが自動的に選択される時には、前述した如きシェードガイド記入用世牙18は必要ではなく、隣在値17の各領域に直接シェードガイドの番号を記入させるようにしてもよい。

そして、このようなシェードガイドに関するR、G、B信号着しくはXYZ表色系などの他の表色系のデータは、予め装置内のメモリに格納させておけばよい。

ところで、現在用いられているシエードガイドは全体が均一な色で構成されているわけではなく、かつ、その表面も微細な凹凸を有し、このシエードガイド会体に対する照明条件を一定にしてカラーカメラ11で撮影したとしても、第9回に示すようにシエードガイドの各点(位置)のR、G、B出力は異なる。第9回は例えばA1モードなるシェードガイドの場合の出力特性を示す。又、シ

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エードガイドは一般に歯牙の形状に排成されており、照明条件を一定としたとしても部分的に見れば照明条件が均一とならず、照明条件の整による 影響も僅かながら存在するものと考えられる。

平均値を求めるのも一つの方法である。 しかるに、 天然僧(襲在館17)はその表面の水分をガーゼ 等により除去しても、その表面の微細な凹凸のため、少なからず水分が残り、カラー CRT12上 の天然僧表示面像には直接反射光を拾つている部分も存在し得る。 従つて、R, G, B信号の値像 計測を行なうと、R, C, B信号の値が異常に高い傾域があり、このようなデータは天然僧の色を 別定する上で餓差を生ずる原因となる。

ちなみに、実際に天然歯又はシエードガイドを 測定した結果によると、R, G, Bデータのはら つきを表わす標準偏差は約0.8~6.0とかな りばらついたものである。データのばらつきが小 さい場合であれば、その平均値をその領域のR, G, B信号としてもよいが、ばらつきが大き時 にはモード値を選択したほうが誤差の少ないもの となる。又、その領域のR, G, B信号のヒスト グラムをカラーCRT12上に表示させ、データ 用できる。

又、現在用いられているシェードガイドにも部分的には半透明感の存在する領域があるが、実際にシェードガイドにより選択されるのは隣在歯の基本色のみであり、半透明感がシエードガイドにより選択されることは少ない。 従つて、 半透明感 を 段階的に示した半透明感過択用の平板型シェードガイドは人工貨作製時において 有効なものとなる。

ところで、第2図(d)に図示例を、報480画 素、視512 画楽なるカラーCRT12の顧問の 約1/3の観味に1本の隣在借17が表示されているものとすると、9分割された個々の領域はおよそ報100 画素、視50 画素、つまり全部で5000 国業に相当することになる。シエードガイド記入用歯牙18似も阿様である。このような条件下に、例えば領域①のR、G、B信号を決めるには5000 開業のR、G、B信号をとり、その

のばらつきを確認することも有効となる。

このようにして際在曽17 (天然僧) の各領域 母のR, G。B信号を求めれば、前述のように、 予め決めてある各シエードガイド19のR, G, B信号と比較することにより、自動的に隣在僧1 7にシエードガイドを対応させることができる。

特に、作製される人工館の材料は、可観光域における分光特性が天然館の分光特性に近いものであるが、完全に一致するものではなく、天然館(四本館)と人工館とを比較した場合、例えばなの内性光灯の下では四者が等色に見えるがあい。このように、材料の分光特性とが異なったとが多い。このように、材料の分光特性とが異なるる限り、あらゆる服明条件の下で天然館であるに見える人工館を作製することが要求される。

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ところで、通常、ある物体をカラーカメラ11 により撮影入力してカラーCRT12上に表示さ せる場合、カラーCRT12上で得られる色情報 はカラーカメラ11とカラーCRT12の特性に より各々異なり、実際の色とも異なったものとな る. しかるに、本実施例の如く、同一の照明条件 にて展明し同一のカラーカメラ11により入力し、 た天然苗(降在樹17)とシエードガイド18と を同一のカラーCRT12上で表示させて比較す ることは、人工**健作製上、極めて有効なものとな** る。つまり、カラーCRT12上に表示される天 然輩と人工歯との双方の色が実際の色と僅かに異 なることになつたとしても、技工士は実際のシェ ードガイドの色とカラーCRT12上のシエード ガイドの色とを対比することができるので、天然 貨の色に近い人工曽を作製することが可能となる。 ちなみに、技工士は、一般に患者口腔内の天然健 とシエードガイドとが写し出されている1枚のイ

ンスタント写真から実際の天然歯の色をある程度 推定する能力を有する。又、隣在歯17の色がシエードガイド19にないような時には選択したシエードガイドの色を槽正することも可能である。

すると、必要なメモリ数は約30メガバイトとな り、このためのメモリはハードデイスクを用いる のがよい。

⑤ このようにして隣在歯17の色情報とシエ

ところで、通常のカメラに組込まれている援像デバイスは光の明暗に応じた振幅が変化する信号を出力するものであり、これだけではカラー確像を入力させることができない。従つて、カラー信号を得るためのカラーカメラ11としては、例え

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これは、遺像レンズ20を通して入射した光を3 各々の操像デバイス、例えばCCD22,23, 24により受光し、R, G, B 信号を並列的に得 るものである。なお、CCD22が赤R用、CC D23が練G用、CCD24が青B用である。又、 カラーカメラ11としては第5回に示すような単 初式カラーカメラでもよい。 これは、矮像レンズ 25を介して入射した光に対し光学LPF26と ともに、特殊な色フィルタアレイ27を用い、1 個の撮像デバイス、例えばCCD28から色信号 を多重した形で同時に得るものである。

つづいて、このようなカラーカメラ11により 撮影したカラー画像をカラーCRT12に表示さ せるための具体的な表示国路構成及び作用を第6 図により設明する。まず、カラーカメラ11より 将られた複合力ラー映像信号からR、G、B信号

平偏向出力回路。周期分離回路、建直傷向出力回 路34にも入力され、更に3フレーム期間判定感 路35にて3フレーム解腎の判定がなされてマル チプレクサ33に入力されている。このマルチプ レクサ33により切換えられた信号は加算回路3 6により輝度信号Yと合成され、映像増幅回路3 7、A/Dコンパータ38、データパツフア39 を介してリフレツシュメモリ40中のRメモリ、 Gメモリ、Bメモリに各々格納される。更に、リ フレツシュメモリ40中のRメモリ、Gメモリ、 Bメモリからの出力は各々D/Aコンパータ41、 映像増幅固路42を通してカラーテレビ31中の 前記RGB出力増幅回路32に入力される。この 時、RGB出力増幅回路32の輝度信号Y蟾子に はカラーテレビ11に接続された映像増幅回路4 3からの輝度信号Yが入力される。

ここに、カラー画像表示を行なう場合、映像増 幅回路43には簡像表示制御回路44から得られ

は第4回に示す3板式カラーカメラが用いられる。 を分離するため色復期回路30が用いられる。こ こに、複合カラー映像信号は輝度信号と、クロミ 色分解プリズム21によりR、G、Bに分解し、 ナンス信号、岡親信号、パースト信号を合成した ものである。又、色復額回路30から出力される 信号はR、G、B信号ではなく、各々輝度信号Y を差し引いたRTY信号、GTY信号、BTY信 号である。一般に、色復興國路30から出力され るこれらのRーY信号、GーY信号、BーY信号 は低電圧であるので取扱いは容易である。これら の信号は最終的には、カラーCRT12月のカラ ーテレビ31中のRGB出力増幅回路32で輝度 信号Yと合成されて、カラーCRT12に出力さ ns.

> ここで、カラー菌像は3フレーム期間で入力す るので、色複調回路30の出力に対しマルチプレ クサ33を用い、R-Y信号、G-Y信号、B-Y信号毎に切換える必要がある。このため、前記 カラーカメラ11からの複合カラー映像信号は水

> た複合両期信号が両期信号レベル調整回路45、 切換えスイツチ46を介して入力されるので、輝 度信号Yは一定とねる。

なお、これらの動作はマイクロコンピュータ4 7を中心に制御される。まず、河別信号に応じて A/Dコンパータ38の動作を制御する画像入力 制御回路48が設けられている。又、國像処理制 毎頭路48も設けられている。制御回路44,4 8、49とリフレツシユメモリ40との間には各 々アドレスパツフア50,51,52が介在され ている。又、切換えスイツチ53の操作により動 作する動作切換え回路54により飼御されるデー タパツフア55がデータパツフア39・画像処理 制御国路49間に接続されている。更には、マウ ス15に対応するカーソル指定都58がカーソル 制御国路 5 7を介して D / A コンパータ 4 1 に接 続されている。

このような構成の下に、カラーカメラ11で銀

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影入力したカラー団像をカラーCRT12上に再 現表示するものである。

効果

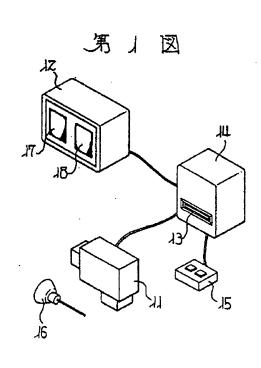
本発明は、上述したように隣在歯のカラー画像を殺視させる際に、半透明感を選択し、歯牙の半透明領域又は象牙質形状を他の画像部分とは異なる色状態で表示させるようにしたので、人工歯作製上、重要な情報の一つである半透明感を技工士に適切に伝達させることができ、よつて、より違れるの少ない人工歯の作製に寄与するものである。

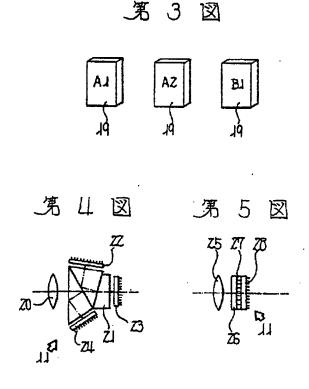
4. 図面の簡単な説明

第1図ないし第8図は本発明の一実施例を示す もので、第1図は概略斜視図、第2図は工程順に 表示状態を示す概略斜視図、第3図はシエードガイドの振略斜視図、第4図及び第5図はカラーカ メラの構造図、第6図はカラー面像表示回路の回 路図、第7図は従来例を示す指示客の平面図、第 8 図は天然館の色質を説明するための説明図、第 9 図は従来のシエードガイドのRGB出力特性図である。

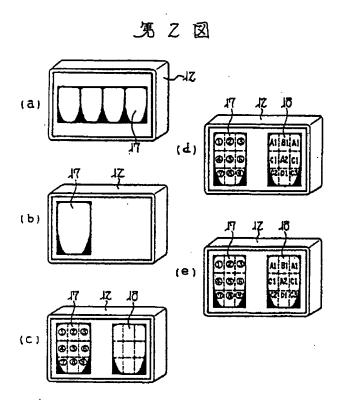
1 1 …カラーカメラ(カラー関像入力手段)、 1 2 …カラーCRT(カラー関像表示手段)、 1 4 …コントローラ(解御手段)、 1 5 …マウス (劉弾操作手段)、 1 7 … 陸在曾

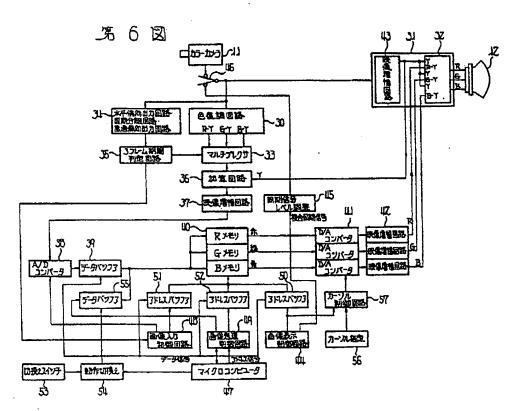
出順人 株式会社 リコー 代理人 柏 木 明 に記述



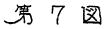


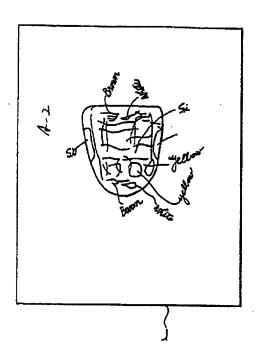
特別昭64-52455 (11)

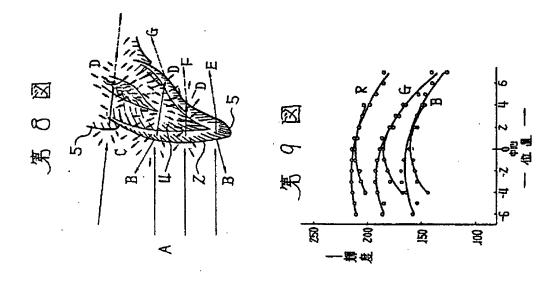




持備昭 64~52455 (12)







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(54) Title of Invention: Method of determining tooth color used in fashioning artificial teeth

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Specification

1. Title of Invention

Method of determining tooth color used in fashioning artificial teeth

2. Claims

A method of determining tooth color used in fashioning artificial teeth, characterized in that color image input means, color image display means, color image storage means, control means, and control operation means are provided; and tooth color reference color information is stored in advance in said color image storage means; and a tooth that will be adjacent to the tooth that is to be fashioned is photographed by said color image input means, which enables illumination of the oral cavity of a patient; and a color image of said adjacent tooth is displayed by said color image display means such that at least the shape of the translucent area of the tooth, or the dentine of the tooth, is shown to differ in color from other parts of the image; and the tooth color of this adjacent tooth is determined by comparison with color reference color information that has been stored in said color image storage means.

3. Detailed Description of the Invention

Industrial Field

The present invention concerns methods of determining tooth color used in fashioning prosthetic artificial teeth in the field of dental care.

Prior Art

Generally speaking, the aesthetic of dentistry is nothing other than the beauty of nature itself. When artificial teeth or prostheses are provided in the front tooth area, it is of the greatest importance that they appear natural. However, it is only very rarely that the color of artificial teeth or prostheses, which are usually made by dental technicians, are sufficiently harmonized with the other teeth in the oral cavity of the patient as to be indistinguishable from them. When the color of artificial teeth, in particular, does not harmonize with that of other teeth in the oral cavity, a problem arises in that the dental technician concludes that the selections of the dentist from the shade guide that is used as a color reference for making artificial teeth were unsatisfactory, and the dentist concludes that color matching with the shade guide as performed by the dental technician was unsatisfactory, so that each blames the other.

Artificial teeth presently in use include: (1) baked porcelain crowns, (2) entirely ceramic crowns, and (3) crowns made using photopolymerized polymer. There are also various materials for partially repairing and supplementing teeth.

Regardless, whether making artificial teeth or supplementing natural teeth, color must be determined. Reference is usually made to the color of the teeth (natural teeth in most cases) that are adjacent to the tooth being treated.

For example, when artificial teeth are to be made, the color of the artificial tooth is matched to that of the adjacent teeth in the oral cavity of the patient by comparing the adjacent teeth to a color reference known as a shade guide. The shade guides sold by various companies each have unique types of color, and shade guides numbers, such as A1, A2, C1, C2, etc., provided. There is no standardization of shade guides among manufacturers thereof, but each shade guide is, generally speaking, constituted in the shape of a tooth, from a material similar to natural teeth. The types of powder, as well as the order and quantities in which they are blended, for the purpose of reproducing each respective shade guide color, are predetermined. A system is thus established whereby artificial teeth that are close in color to the target can be fashioned if the artificial tooth color is selected in accordance with shade guides.

At present, dentists usually select the color of artificial teeth or prostheses in the examination room, based on shade guides. This visual information is then conveyed by the dentist to the dental technician, using a reference chart 1 such as that shown in Figure 7. As can be seen in the illustration, this reference chart 1 includes some relatively detailed expressions. However, if, for example, one such as A2 is selected, from among shade guides including only basic colors, many

imprecise expressions such as "white" and "brown" are used for various areas, so that the visual information as to adjacent teeth that is obtained by the dentist is not conveyed to the dental technician. For this reason, dental technicians sometimes directly examine the oral cavities of patients in the examination room, in order to match the artificial tooth color, when making artificial teeth.

The state inside the oral cavity of the patient in the examination room is thus reproduced in the dental laboratory, and it is expected that visual information can be expressed to a greater degree numerically.

From this perspective, technologies for enlarged color display of the state inside oral cavities of patients are important, and some devices have actually been commercialized. These devices are constituted by systematizing ultra-small CCD color cameras, color televisions, and video players. However, these devices simply provide an enlarged color display of the oral cavity interior, and have no functions that contribute to artificial tooth making.

Although a device that quantifies natural tooth color is commercially available, it is very rarely used in clinical practice.

Herein, natural tooth color will be addressed, with reference to Figure 8. Part of the light, A, that is incident on a natural tooth, 2, is reflected by the surface of the enamel, 3 (specularly reflected light, B, and diffusely reflected light, C), so that gloss and unevenness can be detected, but nearly all of the incident light, A, is transmitted through the enamel, 3, and is incident on the tooth interior. Since the light that is incident on the enamel, 3, is selectively dispersed in transmission through diffusion by minute crystals of hydroxyapatite, the reflected light gives an impression of a high degree of bluish or grayish white translucence, together with an opalescent effect. Since the unique color of the enamel, 3, is further enhanced the thicker it is, the incisal edge, which is almost entirely composed of enamel, 3, shows the unique color of the enamel. There are some cases in which the extremity of the incisal edge is so lacking in thickness that it is almost completely transparent. On the other hand, while a portion of the light that is transmitted through the enamel, 3, and reaches the border between the dentine, 4, and the dentinoenamel junction, is diffused in that area, the yellow orange and orange that is the unique spectrum thereof is reflected toward the vestibular surface of the tooth. In the central part, wherein the enamel, 3, is thick, the unique enamel color is seen as mixed with the color of the dentinoenamel junction and the dentine, 4, but the effect of the unique enamel color is attenuated closer to the neck of the tooth (the part close to the gingiva, 5), and the color of the dentinoenamel junction and the dentine. 4. is strongly reflected. In Figure 8, D represents diffusely transmitted light, E represents directly transmitted light (specularly transmitted light), F represents specularly transmitted light that is attenuated in the dentine, 4, and G represents specularly transmitted light that is very attenuated. A red tint is also added in the vicinity of the neck of the tooth, as an effect of the color of the gingiva, 5. The light transmitted from the lingual surface of the tooth diminishes the intensity of light that is reflected toward the vestibular surface of tooth, which results in a darkening of the natural tooth, 2. Otherwise, the finger-shaped structure of the

dentine, 4 in the incisal edge is seen to stand out in sharp outline against the highly transparent enamel, since it is highly reflective, and hypocalcified areas in the enamel, 3, as well as areas that have been decalcified by caries and the like, diffuse light, and thus appear as white bands and spots. In addition, the natural tooth, 2 has pronounced fluorescence, and emits a beautiful yellow and blue fluorescent light when irradiated with ultraviolet light.

That is, the natural tooth is translucent with respect to visible light, and the color of the natural tooth varies greatly, depending on both illumination conditions and the direction of observation, since multiple diffusions of light penetrating the interior of the tooth occur repeatedly due to apatite crystals in the enamel. Meanwhile, existing tooth color measuring devices measure changes in tooth color due to multiple diffusions of this kind only under certain limited conditions, and are inadequate for obtaining the characteristic values of natural teeth needed for fashioning artificial teeth. Existing tooth color measuring devices are for this reason very rarely used in clinical practice.

It is therefore extremely difficult to accurately represent the color of natural teeth (adjacent teeth). However, the reason that the color of artificial teeth does not harmonize with that of the other teeth in the oral cavities of patients is related to the way in which tasks in prosthesis are divided, at present, between the dentist, who determines the color of the artificial tooth, and the dental technician, who fashions the artificial tooth, and a major factor is the imprecision of information conveyed between them using a reference chart 1.

Selection of tooth translucence (degree of translucence and the range thereof) is therefore a very important item of data for fashioning artificial teeth. In this respect, it is difficult to select translucence based on visual determination, using conventional shade guides.

Object

Taking the foregoing points into account, the object of the present invention is to provide a method of determining tooth color used in fashioning artificial teeth that will enable precise determination of the color of artificial teeth and prostheses, with reference to the color of adjacent teeth, as well as precise selection of tooth translucence for fashioning artificial teeth and prostheses, thus contributing to fabrication of artificial teeth and prostheses that more closely resemble natural teeth.

Constitution

In order to achieve the aforementioned object, the present invention is a method of determining tooth color used in fashioning artificial teeth, characterized in that color image input means, color image display means, color image storage means, control means, and control operation means are provided; and tooth color reference color information is stored in advance in the color image storage means; and a tooth that will be adjacent to the tooth that is to be fashioned is photographed by the color image input means, which enables illumination of the oral cavity of a patient; and a color image of the adjacent tooth is displayed by the color image display means such that at least

the shape of the translucent area of the tooth, or the dentine of the tooth, is shown to differ in color from other parts of the image; and the tooth color of this adjacent tooth is determined by comparison with color reference color information that has been stored in the color image storage means.

In the following, an embodiment of the present invention will be described, with reference to Figures 1 through 6. Firstly, Figure 1 shows a schematic view of the constitution of the tooth color display device used to implement the present embodiment. This device comprises a color camera, 11, as color image input means, a color cathode ray tube (CRT), 12, as color image display means, a floppy disk, 13, a controller, 14, as control means, and a mouse, 15, as control operation means. A light source, 16, that illuminates the oral cavity of a patient during photography with the color camera, 11, is also provided.

The basic function of this sort of device is to determine the color of the artificial tooth that is to be fashioned by comparing, on the same color CRT, 12, screen, a color image of the shade guide and a color image of the natural teeth in the oral cavity of the patient, which are input by the same color camera, 11, under standard lighting conditions. At this time, it is possible to compute the color difference between two points by obtaining R, G and B signals from arbitrarily selected points on the color image, and to select the shade closest to an adjacent tooth, which serves as a color reference for fashioning the artificial tooth. For this purpose, shade guide color images, as well as R, G and B signals from various points, are stored on the internal hard disk memory (color image storage means) of the device; color information from color images of the adjacent tooth, as well as the numbers and the like of shade guides, after selection, are stored on a portable storage medium, such as the floppy disk, 13. This portable storage medium becomes a medium for conveying information from the dentist to the dental technician, instead of a reference chart. There is also no particular need for a light source if the examination room and dental laboratory lighting, including the intensity thereof, are the same, provided by super-high color rendition fluorescent lights (FL-EDL), for example. Control operation means are also not limited to the mouse, 15.

The following is a description of the present embodiment procedure, using the aforementioned constitution, as illustrated in Figure 2.

(1) First of all the interior of the oral cavity of the patient, and particularly the teeth adjacent to the tooth that is to receive care, are photographed in the examination room, using color camera, 11, while illuminated under standard lighting conditions, and displayed on the screen of the color CRT, 12, via the controller, 14, as shown in Figure 2(a). In the drawing, multiple teeth are shown on the color CRT, but among these, the tooth shown as 17 is the adjacent tooth on which attention will focus.

Herein, moisture is removed from the tooth surface, using gauze or the like, when the oral cavity is photographed. The angle between the tooth and the color camera, 11, is adjusted with respect to the illumination from the light source, 16, so that the light that is directly reflected from the tooth is greatly reduced. Photographs can be taken with a particularly low level of light directly

reflected from the tooth if a polarizing filter is used with the light source, 16, and the color camera, 11. The reason for this is that when adjacent tooth, 17, is used as a reference for fashioning an artificial tooth, surface structure and translucence, in addition to color, are important issues. As regards tooth surface structure, there are white bands that are visible on natural teeth, and enamel scoring wherein organic matter is trapped in flaws in the enamel (enamel lamellae), for example, and these change with aging. Reproduction of the color of the natural tooth is maintained to some extent if it is photographed using the color camera, 11, under ordinary illumination, and displayed on the color CRT, 12, but the microstructure of the tooth surface is difficult to reproduce, because of the light reflected therefrom. When a polarizing filter is interposed between the light source, 16, and the color camera, 11, there is very little directly reflected light effect resulting from illumination, enabling reproduction of the microstructure of the tooth surface.

- (2) Next, an enlarged view of the tooth, 17, that is adjacent to the tooth receiving care is displayed on the color CRT, 12, and shifted to an appropriate position on the screen, as shown in Figure 2(b). The color of an adjacent tooth, 17, such as this one, is used as a color reference for fashioning the artificial tooth. The display status shown in Figure 2(a) may also be eliminated, and the expanded display shown in Figure 2(b) employed immediately. In order to avoid the aforementioned light directly reflected from the tooth when inputting images, image processing may be utilized as necessary to eliminate the directly reflected light component. Tooth image processing, such as edge enhancement, may also be implemented.
- (3) Next, the adjacent tooth, 17, that is displayed in expanded view on color CRT, 12, is divided into sections with dotted lines, as shown in Figure 2(c). The tooth is divided into sections in this way in order to substitute a shade guide color for each section, since, as discussed above, the adjacent tooth (natural tooth) is not constituted entirely of a uniform color. That is, the color of the artificial tooth is determined with reference to that of the adjacent tooth, but the color of the natural tooth (adjacent tooth) varies between the neck of the tooth close to the gingiva, the central area, and at the incisal edge. The color information necessary for fashioning artificial teeth could not be obtained with precision using conventional methods, wherein only the basic color (for example, B2) of the adjacent tooth is selected from among shade guides that serve as color references. The adjacent tooth, 17, which is to serve as a color reference for fashioning artificial teeth, is therefore divided into sections, and a shade guide is substituted for each section. The procedure by which this adjacent tooth, 17, is divided, and the number of sections, are optional, but as indicated by sections (1) through (9) in Figure 2(c), for example, it appears that the minimum requirement is 9 sections or so. On the same screen of the color CRT, 12, on which the adjacent tooth, 17, is displayed divided into sections, the artificial tooth that is to be fabricated is also shown in simplified form at the same time, next to the adjacent tooth. The purpose of this is to record the color of the artificial tooth that is to be fabricated, with reference to the color of the adjacent tooth, 17. Herein, a tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide is displayed. This tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide is divided into sections corresponding to the sections into which the adjacent tooth, 17, is divided, and the shade

guide colors or shade guide numbers for sections of the tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide that correspond to sections of the adjacent tooth, 17, are recorded.

At this point, there is a function that compares, on the same color CRT, each of the sections into which the adjacent tooth, 17, which is the color reference for the artificial tooth, is divided, to [the corresponding] section of the shade guide that serves as a tooth color reference, and replaces each section of the adjacent tooth with a shade guide. The two are then quantitatively compared, using the R, G and B signals of the color images, and the shade guide number that has been selected for each section of the adjacent tooth, 17, may be recorded, once all sections have been automatically replaced with shade guide numbers (that is, as shown in Figure 2(b) [sic]). It is also necessary to display on the color CRT, 12, screen the shape of the tooth regarding which results of color comparison with the adjacent tooth, 17, that is, the artificial tooth that is to be fashioned, are recorded, if all sections of the adjacent tooth, 17, are replaced with shade guide colors or numbers, based on visual determination by a dentist. The shape of the artificial tooth (18, for recording a shade guide) is therefore displayed on color CRT, 12. At this point, the shape of the adjacent tooth, 17, that is used as a color reference may be used as it is, as the shape of the artificial tooth that is displayed together with the adjacent tooth, 17. This is because adjacent teeth usually have a similar odontogenesis. However, when the shape of the artificial tooth to be fashioned is drastically different from that of the adjacent tooth, 17, the contour and shape are usually stored in advance in the non-portable storage means (hard disk memory) inside of the color image storage means in the device, according to the type of tooth. It may be retrieved from this memory and displayed.

The most difficult aspect of determining the color of the natural (adjacent) tooth is ascertaining the translucence thereof (the degree of translucence and the range (shape) thereof). The kind of translucence that the natural tooth has, and the shape that the translucent area assumes are very important items of information for the dental technician. If the natural tooth is photographed at this point, using the color camera, 11, and displayed on the color CRT screen, the translucence of the natural tooth under the prevailing lighting conditions can be reproduced to some degree. Other information concerning the natural tooth can be added by varying lighting conditions in the oral cavity and natural tooth backgrounds, and this data will be useful in fashioning artificial teeth. It is especially effective to constitute members that are connected to the color camera that is inserted into the oral cavity when photographing the interior of the oral cavity of the patient of a uniformly high density color, since the translucence is clearer if the rear (background) of the tooth is constituted of high density colors. In particular, information that indicates translucence is included in the RGB signals that are the color image information read from the natural tooth by the color camera, 11. By varying lighting conditions and background colors, clearer signals can be obtained. A fixed distance between the adjacent tooth, 17, and the color camera, 11, is preferred when photographing and inputting [an image of] the adjacent tooth, 17, inside the oral cavity, using the color camera, 11. Increasing the image information input also necessitates varying the angle between the adjacent tooth, 17, and the color camera, 11. It is acceptable, for this purpose, to secure the color camera, 11,

and the members that are connected thereto, to the patient, thus providing a point of support, and making it possible to vary the angle between the adjacent tooth, 17, and the color camera, 11.

Selection of the translucence of the tooth provides a very important item of data for fashioning the artificial tooth. It is difficult to select translucence by visual judgement, based on shade guides, as in the conventional methods. In the present embodiment, translucence is selected, and the shape of the translucent area of the natural tooth (adjacent tooth 17) can be distinguished from other areas displayed on the color CRT, 12, screen by varying the colors, for example. This information will prove to be extremely useful data, since it can be reproduced in the same form by the dental technician. In regard to this point, there is no translucence in areas in which there is dentine; the translucence manifests in the incisal edge. Instead of the translucent area, therefore, displaying the shape of the dentine of the tooth on the color CRT, 12, screen, so that it can be distinguished from other areas, has the same effect.

(4) Thus, all areas of the artificial tooth (18, for recording a shade guide) are replaced with shade guides, as shown in Figure 2(d), based on visual observation, while consulting the color distribution of the adjacent tooth, 17, which is displayed on the color CRT, 12, screen, as shown in Figure 2(c). Herein, the shade guide numbers A1, B1, etc., are displayed, but it is also acceptable to replace the sections with shade guides colors. In a specific example, when determining the color of section (1) of the adjacent tooth, 17, shade guide colors for the section of tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide, which is displayed on the right side, are displayed sequentially, and these colors are compared on the screen to the color of section (1) of the adjacent tooth, 17. The shade guide that matches, or nearly matches, is then specified. The area of the screen in which the shade guides are displayed is optional. For example, it may partially overlap the area for adjacent tooth, 17, to which the shade guides are compared.

The color of section (1) of the adjacent tooth, 17, can be automatically determined by obtaining the R, G and B signals from section (1) of the adjacent tooth, 17, and comparing these to the R, G and B signals of each of the shade guides, which are color references that are input and stored in advance for fashioning artificial teeth. That is, color information from arbitrary points on the color image that is displayed on the color CRT, 12, is expressed numerically, and a tooth color reference that minimizes the difference from the color input for the tooth in the oral cavity is automatically selected. At this time, colors may be compared according to an RGB color system derived from these R, G and B signals, or else r, g and b signals may be obtained from the R, G and B signals. Conversion to another color system, such as an XYZ system, with an automatic selection of a shade guide that minimizes the color difference, is also acceptable.

When the shade guide corresponding to each section of the adjacent tooth, 17, is selected automatically in this way, the aforementioned tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide is not needed, and shade guide numbers may be entered directly into the sections of the adjacent tooth, 17.

The R, G and B signals thus associated with shade guides, or data of another color system, such as an XYZ system, can be stored in advance in the internal memory of the device.

The shade guides that are presently in use are not entirely constituted according to uniform colors, and there are microscopic uneven areas on the surfaces thereof. While all of these shade guides are photographed by the color camera, 11, under standardized lighting conditions, the R, G and B output of each point (position) on a shade guide differs, as shown in Figure 9. Figure 9 shows the output properties of a shade guide in A1 mode, for example. Shade guides are usually tooth-shaped constitutions, and even if only a part thereof is observed under uniform lighting conditions, the lighting conditions lose uniformity, and there are apparently some effects, though slight, of these differences in lighting condition.

To unambiguously determine shade guide color, therefore, it is best to use a material with approximately the same spectral characteristics as the natural tooth, and that is constituted in a uniform color. Hence, as shown in Figure 3, flat plate shade guides, 19, comprising this sort of material and color, are used in the present embodiment. That is, flat plate shade guides, 19, are formed such that the color reference surface is flat, and the R, G and B output from this surface has little variation. In addition, color information obtained in regard to shade guide, 19, when the illumination conditions are varied, and when the relative positional relationship of color camera, 12, [sic] and shade guide, 19, especially the angle, is varied, that is, R, G and B data, can be very useful as data if it is stored in advance in the internal memory of the device.

There are also some areas of translucence in some of the shade guides that are presently in use, but in fact, shade guides are selected according only to the basic color of the adjacent teeth; translucence is rarely a criterion for selecting shade guides. Flat shade guides of graduated translucence, for the purpose of selecting translucence, would therefore be useful when fashioning artificial teeth.

If the example illustrated in Figure 2(d) is such that a single adjacent tooth, 17, is displayed in a area representing approximately 1/3 of the screen of the color CRT, 12, which is constituted with 480 pixels vertically and 512 pixels horizontally, each area, divided into 9 parts, would have approximately 100 pixels vertically and 50 pixels horizontally. This would be equivalent to 5000 pixels overall. The tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide would be similar. Under these conditions, one procedure would be to receive 5000 pixels of R, G and B signals to determine the R, G and B signals for section (1), for example, and then compute the mean of these. Even if gauze is used to remove moisture from the surface of the natural tooth (adjacent tooth 17), some moisture, however small an amount, may remain, due to microscopic uneven areas on the surfaces thereof, to be partially picked up in the natural tooth image displayed on the color CRT, 12, as directly reflected light. There are therefore areas with extremely high R, G and B signal parameters, when measuring R, G and B signal images, and data of this kind is a factor giving rise to errors when measuring the color of natural teeth.

According to results of actual measurements of natural teeth and shade guides, variation is such that the standard deviation, which represents variation in R, G and B data, is approximately 0.8 to 6.0. If there is little variation in the data, it is acceptable to use the mean of the R, G and B signals

from the relevant area, but if there is a large variation, there will be less error if the mode value is selected. Therefore, it is also useful to display a histogram of the R, G, and B signals from the relevant area on the color CRT, 12, to check data variation.

If R, G and B signals are obtained from each area of the adjacent (natural) tooth, 17, shade guides can be matched automatically to the adjacent tooth, 17, through comparison with predetermined R, G and B signals from each shade guide, 19, as discussed above.

The spectral characteristics of materials used to fabricate artificial teeth are especially close to the spectral characteristics of natural teeth, but the match is not perfect. There are many cases in which there are problems in that a natural tooth (adjacent tooth) and an artificial tooth seem to be of the same color when compared under indoor fluorescent lighting conditions, but appear to be different in color when viewed in sunlight. While it is thus impossible to fashion artificial teeth that will appear to be the same color as natural teeth under all lighting conditions, insofar as the spectral characteristics of the materials are different, it is essential to be capable of fashioning artificial teeth that will cause as little embarrassment as possible under any lighting conditions.

If, as is usual, an object is photographed and input by the color camera, 11, and displayed on the color CRT, 12, the color information that is obtained from the color CRT 12 will vary in various ways according to the properties of the color camera, 11, and the color CRT, 12, and thus will differ from the actual color. It would therefore be very useful in fashioning artificial teeth if, as in the present embodiment, the natural tooth (adjacent tooth 17) and shade guide, 19, which have been input by the same color camera, 11, while illuminated under the same lighting conditions, were displayed and compared on the same color CRT, 12. Thus, even if the color of both the natural tooth and the artificial tooth as displayed on the color CRT, 12, are slightly different from the actual color, the dental technician will be able to compare the actual shade guide color to the shade guide color as displayed on the color CRT, 12, and will thereby be able to fashion an artificial tooth that is close in color to the natural tooth. Incidentally, technicians usually have the ability to surmise the actual color of the natural tooth from a single instant photograph of the natural tooth inside of the oral cavity of the patient, and of the shade guide. The selected shade guide colors can also be supplemented if the color of the adjacent tooth, 17, is not in the shade guide.

The color image information obtained in this way is stored on a portable information storage medium, such as a floppy disk, 13. If a natural tooth or shade guide is displayed in color on a color CRT, 12, 64 gradations are sufficient, but a minimum of 32 gradations are essential. This is because false contours arise, rendering the image unsatisfactory, if the tooth is displayed at a 16 gradations level or less. At present, the memory space required to display a color image of 480×512 pixels with 32 gradations is $480 \times 512 \times 2^5 \times 3$ = approximately 3 megabytes. Displaying the image of a single tooth in 1/3 of the area of a color CRT 12 screen would therefore require approximately 1 megabyte of memory space. On the other hand, if a single shade guide has 30 colors, it would require approximately 30 megabytes of memory space, and it would be better for this reason to use hard disk memory.

That is, all of the colors in the shade guides that are one of the characteristics of the present embodiment, replacing the reference chart system, and which are a tooth color reference requiring a very large amount of memory space, are stored in the non-portable hard disk memory that is inside a device such as the controller, 14, whereas the color image information for the adjacent tooth, 17, of an individual patient, and the color information for the selected shade guide, are stored on a portable storage medium such as a floppy disk, 13. The information required for fabrication of the artificial tooth is thus stored on a floppy disk, 13, and since it is easily portable, this floppy disk, 13, replaces the conventional reference chart as a means of conveying information between dentists and dental technicians.

(5) Thus, the dentist gives the dental technician the floppy disk, 13, on which the color information for adjacent tooth, 17, and the shade guide, 19, number selection information are stored, and the dental technician reproduces the information on the color CRT screen in the dental laboratory, as shown in Figure 2(e). The artificial tooth is fashioned with reference to the display image that is reproduced. At this time, a shade guide, 19, number is recorded in each of the sections of the natural tooth in the reproduced image, so that an artificial tooth that is close to the adjacent tooth, 17, can be fabricated. The artificial tooth that is actually fabricated is photographed and input by the color camera, 12 [sic], as in the aforementioned case, and an image of the artificial tooth is displayed on the color CRT, 12, screen instead of the tooth, 18, for recording a shade guide, so that it can be compared with the adjacent tooth, 17, which is displayed on the same screen.

Imaging systems that are integrated into ordinary cameras output signals the amplitude of which varies according to the presence or absence of light, and color images cannot be input by this means alone. Hence, a 3-plate color camera, for example, as shown in Figure 4, can be used as the color camera, 11, for receiving color signals. Herein, incident light transmitted via imaging lens, 20, is separated by color separation prism, 21, into R, G and B signals. Individual imaging devices, for example, charge coupled devices (CCDs). 22 through 24, receive light, so that R, G and B signals are received concurrently. CCD 22 is used for the red signal, R, CCD 23 for green, G, and CCD 24 for blue, B. A single plate color camera is also acceptable as the color camera, 11. Herein, using an optical low pass filter (LPF), 26, and a special color filter array, 27, color signals corresponding to light that is incident via an imaging lens, 25, are received simultaneously in multiplexed form from a single device, for example, CCD 28.

Next, the constitution and operation of a specific display circuit for displaying on color CRT, 12, a color image that has been photographed by a color camera, 11, of this kind will be described, based on Figure 6. First, a color demodulator circuit, 30, is used to separate R, G and B signals from the composite color image signal received from color camera, 11. At this point, the composite color image signal is a synthesis of a luminance signal, Y, a chrominance signal, a synchronization signal, and a burst signal. The signals that are output from the color demodulator circuit, 30, are an R-Y signal, a G-Y signal and a B-Y signal, from each of which the luminance signal, Y, has been subtracted, rather than the R, G and B signals. These R-Y, G-Y and B-Y signals that are output from

the color demodulator circuit, 30, are usually easy to process, since they are of low voltage. The signals are finally synthesized with the luminance signal, Y, by RGB output amplification circuit, 32, in the color television, 31, that is used for the color CRT, 12, and then output to the color CRT, 12.

Herein, the color image is input in 3 frame times, so that it is necessary to switch for each of the R-Y, G-Y and B-Y signals, with respect to the output from the color demodulator circuit, 30, using the multiplexer, 33. The composite color image signal output from the aforementioned color camera, 11, is also input to the horizontal deflection circuit/synchronizing separation circuit/vertical deflection circuit, 34. The 3 frame times are determined by the 3 frame time determination circuit, 35, and input to the multiplexer, 33. These signals, which have been switched by the multiplexer, 33, are synthesized with the luminance signal, Y by the adding circuit, 36, and are stored in the R memory, G memory and B memory, respectively, in the refresh memory, 40, via the image amplification circuit, 37, the A/D converter, 38, and the data buffer, 39. The output from the R memory, G memory and B memory in the refresh memory, 40, are each input to the aforementioned RGB output amplification circuit, 32, in the color television, 31, via the D/A converter, 41, and the image amplification circuit, 42. At this time, the luminance signal, Y, from the image amplification circuit, 32.

When a color image is displayed at this point, the composite synchronization signal that has been received from the image display control circuit, 44, is input to the image amplification circuit, 43, via the synchronization signal level regulating circuit, 45, and the switch, 46, so that the luminance signal, Y, is constant.

These operations are mainly controlled by the microcomputer, 47. First, an image input control circuit, 48, is arranged to control the operation of A/D converter, 38, in accordance with the synchronization signal. Image processing control circuit, 49, is also provided. Address buffers, 50, 51 and 52, are interposed between, respectively, control circuits, 44, 48 and 49, and refresh memory, 40. The data buffer, 55, which is controlled by operation switching circuit, 54, through manipulation of the switch, 53, connects the data buffer, 39, to the image processing control circuit, 49. The cursor indicator, 56, that corresponds to the mouse, 15, is connected to D/A converter, 41, via cursor control circuit, 57.

In this type of constitution, the color image that is photographed and input by the color camera, 11, is reproduced and displayed on the color CRT, 12.

Effect

When a color image of an adjacent tooth as recited above is to be displayed, the present invention selects translucence, and displays the color status of the translucent section or the shape of the dentine, which differs from that of other areas of the image. It is therefore possible to properly convey translucence, which is an item of information that is important to fashioning artificial teeth, to dental technicians, thereby contributing to the fabrication of artificial teeth that cause less embarrassment.

4. Brief Description of the Drawings

Figures 1 through 6 show an embodiment of the present invention. Figure 1 is a simplified perspective view. Figure 2 is a simplified perspective view showing display status in process sequence. Figure 3 shows simplified perspective views of shade guides. Figures 4 and 5 are structural diagrams of color cameras. Figure 6 is a circuit diagram of a color image display circuit. Figure 7 is a plan view of a reference chart showing a conventional example. Figure 8 is an explanatory drawing that is used to describe the color of a natural tooth. Figure 9 is an RGB output characteristic chart for conventional shade guides.

11: color camera (color image input means); 12: color CRT (color image display means); 14: controller (control means); 15: mouse (control operation means); 17: adjacent tooth

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Figure 1

[numbering as in original]

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 2

Figure 6

- 11 color camera
- 30 color demodulator circuit
- 33 multiplexer
- 34 horizontal deflection circuit/synchronizing separation circuit/vertical deflection circuit
- 35 3 frame time determination circuit
- 36 adding circuit
- 37 image amplification circuit
- 38 A/D converter
- 39 data buffer
- R memory | red

```
B memory | blue
41 D/A converter
    D/A converter
    D/A converter
42 image amplification circuit
    image amplification circuit
    image amplification circuit
    image amplification circuit
43
44 image display control circuit
45
    synchronization signal level regulating [circuit]
[below 45:] composite synchronization signal
47
    microcomputer
48
    image input control circuit
[below 48:] data signal
49 image processing control circuit
[below 49:] address signal
50 address buffer
    address buffer
51
52
    address buffer
53
    switch
54
    operation switching circuit
55
    data buffer
56 cursor indicator
57
    cursor control circuit
                                            Figure 7
                                            Figure 8
                                            Figure 9
[vertical axis:] luminance
[horizontal axis:]
                      Center
                   - Position -
```

G memory | green